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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the career of Charles Macklin of London, an 18th-century actor/director/teacher, whose treatise on his performative approach and pedagogical techniques, "On the Science of Acting," was lost at sea in a 1772 shipwreck. Citing two letters Macklin received from his actress daughter, Maria, and fragments of his own accounts as well as contemporary comments, the paper considers what might have been included in his lost treatise. The first part discusses Macklin's acting--he was on the stage for nearly 70 years and is credited with anticipating Garrick in developing a more natural acting style. According to the paper, his portrayal of Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice" was probably his best role; Alexander Pope is known to have exclaimed: "This is the Jew that Shakespeare drew." The second part discusses Macklin's pedagogy, noting that at every stage of his career he taught acting. The paper quotes remarks from his students which confirm that his teaching was like his personality--kindly but "no nonsense." It states that Macklin began by ridding his students of all formality and artificiality of manner, and when he felt the student was able to achieve a "naturalism" in his delivery, then Macklin had the performer "accommodate techniques to the requirements of the play." The paper also examines Macklin as a director. It concludes that, through personal example and his students, Charles Macklin had a pervasive influence on the mid-18th century trend toward a more natural acting style. Contains a picture of Macklin and a 22-item bibliography. (NKA)

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Barbara Mackey

THE LOST ACTING TREATISE OF CHARLES MACKLIN

ED 421 735

Charles Macklin is remembered primarily as the man who stunned eighteenth century London audiences by portraying Shylock as a serious character and by putting Macbeth in kilts. In his own time, Macklin was also well known as an advocate of a more natural style of acting and as an outstanding teacher and director. Thomas Davies, writing his Dramatic Micellanies [sic] in 1784 when Macklin was still performing, describes him thus:

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> Macklin, whose skill in acting is acknowledged to be superior to that of any man, who is the best teacher of the art, and is still, at a very advanced age, a powerful comedian.... (I: 39)

Macklin described his performative approach and pedagogical techniques in a treatise entitled "On the Science of Acting," but the manuscript was lost at sea and never re-written. Because of his easily-aroused temper and frequent disputes with managers, Macklin did not work steadily at any one theatre, but toured playhouses in the capitols and provinces of England and Ireland. It was on one of these trips that he was shipwreaked off the coast of Ireland. Accounts disagree about exactly when this happened and where the ship was headed. The Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel states that Macklin was likely on his way to Dublin subsequent to a March 13, 1772 appearance at Limerick (9: 18).

In the Harvard Theatre Collection are two letters to Macklin in Dublin from his actress daughter, Maria, in London.

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In the first, dated March 23, 1772, Maria inquires anxiously about her father's health and hopes that he will still be able to come to London to perform for her April benefit, as was his yearly custom (Biog. Dict. 9: 18). However, Macklin did not go that year, as he was recovering from an illness. The second letter from Maria is dated May 6, 1772, and states:

> I sincerely lament the loss of your most valuable library, it was indeed a dreadful stroke. Yet I had rather all the books in the world had been lost sooner than you shou'd have suffer'd such an illness or have ventur'd down to the wreak in such weather. (Biog. Dict. 9: 18)

This letter implies that Macklin's illness was caused by exposure when the actor tried to rescue his possessions from the sea. Although he remained in good health until very old age, Macklin would have been in his early seventies at this time. James Thomas Kirkman, Macklin's first biographer, writing just two years after the actor's death in 1797, says that Macklin shipped "all his furniture, plate, pictures, and a very choice and valuable library of books, worth upwards of five thousand pounds." Almost all of this was lost. He continues:

> What he had to regret most was the destruction of his books and manuscripts, the labour of many years close study.... The merciless waves destroyed his treatises on the *Science of Acting*, on the *Works of Shakespeare*, on *Comedy*, *Tragedy*, and many other subjects, together with several manuscripts of infinite value and importance to the British Theatre. (II: 46-47)

Can one reconstruct what Macklin may have included in his lost treatise on acting? Fragments of Macklin's own accounts plus contemporary comments prove fruitful in understanding

three areas: his acting, his pedagogy, and finally his play direction.

I. Macklin's Acting

Macklin was on the professional stage for nearly seventy years, finally retiring in his nineties.[1] During this time, various acting styles went in and out of fashion, fluctuating between an emphasis on "art" or on "nature." The eighteenth century began with the declamatory style of James Quin, in which artifice prevailed; it ended with the dignity and formal school of the Kembles. Mid-century came Macklin and Garrick with their attempt at an acting style based more on observation of life and a dislike of overdone artifice

While some scholars have acknowledged Macklin's contribution as foremost, most have credited Garrick with being the primary mover to a more natural style. Yet Macklin both anticipated Garrick and advanced this style more consistantly throughout his career. Could history's emphasis on Garrick be partially due to the loss of Macklin's manuscripts? A few scholars recognize Macklin's preeminence. Writing in the mid-twentieth century, Brander Mathews says that early "accounts agree in representing Macklin as Garrick's precursor in the return to natural acting" (8). Alan S. Downer, in "Nature to Advantage Dressed: Eighteenth Century Acting," says "that Charles Macklin was ever anything but a naturalistic performer cannot be questioned" (1012-13). Edward

Abbot Perry records Macklin's early years and his first abortive attempt to play in London (probably in 1725):

> He was eminently a reformer.... Already Macklin had attempted, in the provinces, something more akin to nature than the style of acting that was current in his early days, and [John] Rich, the London manager, had given him little encouragement. "I spoke so *familiar*, sir," says Macklin, in remembering those days, "and so little in the *hoity-toity* tone of the tragedy of that day, that the manager told me I had better go to grass for another year or two."

Macklin was thus obliged to continue playing the provinces until 1733 (21).

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to judge an actor's style from the distance of two hundred years.[2] Modern critics must rely on comments by the actor's contemporaries who judged the actor in relation to his peers or to those who closely preceeded him. Macklin may have been the strongest promoter and examplar of an acting style which seemed to his contemporaries to be unusually lifelike, but this does not mean that the actor was playing the social realism of today, nor did the plays of his day call for it. Indeed, indications show that by today's standards Macklin's performances would be considered heightened. By examining Macklin's few remaining writings as well as contemporary performance criticism, one can deduce at least three principles upon which he based his acting approach: the elimination of artifice, the observation and imitation of real life, and the enlargement of life.

Foremost, Macklin objected to stock artificial poses called "attitudes" -- many copied from antique statuary or neo-classic paintings -- and "starts" or exaggerated

reactions. Particularly at the end of the century when the Kembles encouraged the return to a more stately style of acting, he "stubbornly refused to court applause by resorting to them" (Appleton 158). The Secret History of the Green-Room, written in 1795, expresses amazement that Macklin's acting has not kept up with the current fashion:

> Macklin's ideas of acting are peculiar -- he denies the necessity for attitude and start, and all the fixed glare of tragic expression: he will not allow the legs to be thrown apart in the modern way; and the usual inflection of the moderns in declamation he dislikes. (68)

John Doran's 1865 Annals of the English Stage characterizes Macklin's acting as "essentially manly; there was nothing of trick about it" (II: 192). James Thomas Kirkman, Macklin's contemporary biographer, says that Macklin's gestures were not only "void of all affection" but also that he paid attention to the business of the scene, making sure his actions were appropriate to the words he uttered (II: 429).

In contrast, Macklin frequently criticized Garrick for bustling about the stage to no purpose. Kirkman, whose authoritative biography incorporates Macklin's own remaining papers and memoranda, quotes the actor as saying:

> [Garrick's] whole action, when he made love in tragedy or comedy, when he was familiar with his friend, when he was in anger, sorrow, rage, consisted in squeezing his hat, thumping his breast, strutting up and down the stage, and pawing the characters that he acted with.... And when he did not paw or hawl the character, he stalked between them and the audience; and that generally when they were speaking the most important and interesting passage in the scene -- which demanded, in propriety, a strict attention. (II: 265)

Twentieth century writers quote the above as well as similiar contemporary opinions to deduce that it was Garrick's high energy level in contrast to the stillness of classical actors that created his sense of realism. Kalman Burnim says:

> Macklin more nearly approached...what we now have come to understand as a natural manner of acting. Garrick's new "naturalistic" style retained much of the posing and posturing of the earlier actors; it was however infused with a vitality and spirit which took the town by storm. (57; see also West 65-66)

Mackin believed instead in the close observation and imitation of life. David Garrick, in his "Short Treatise upon Acting," mentions how Macklin, before playing Shylock

> ...has been observed constantly to attend the exchange for weeks together, before he exhibited one of Shakespeare's most inimitable and difficult characters, and so far succeeded by his great attention and observation of the manner, dress, and behavior of a particular tribe of people, that the judgement, application, and extraordinary pains he took to divert the public rationally, was amply rewarded with crowded theatres and unequalled applause. (135)

In his notes for a public lecture entitled "The Art and Duty of an Actor," Macklin is especially insistant that the actor characterize, rather than mold the role to himself:

> As the poet hath drawn an individual characteristic, so ought it to be represented: the actor must take especial care not to mould [sic] and suit the character to his looks, tones, gestures, and manners; if he does so, it will then become the actor's character, and not the poet's. No; he must suit his looks, tones, gestures, and manners to the character: the suiting the character to the powers of the actor is imposture. (qtd. in Kirkman II: 364)

Unfortunately, Macklin was limited in the roles he could play because of his physique, voice, and temperament. Whereas Garrick was a chameleon and could disguise himself in a great

many roles, Macklin had a stocky build, large hooked nose, massive jaw, and heavy lines in his face. Contemporary John Bernard described him as "a broad-chested, ball-headed, shaggy-browed, hooked-nose individual" (quoted in Mathews 21). He often had to struggle against his physical type in order to characterize. Yet, he was a more thoughtful and intellectual actor than Garrick, and even in parts that did not physically suit him, such as Mercutio, he created an intelligent, well-thought out characterization (Mathews 9; Bartley 18-19). However, Macklin's most memorable roles were those of heavies such as Iago, Shylock, Macbeth, or, in comedies, fops or blocking characters. A partial list of his roles in Shakespeare includes, in addition to those mentioned above: Richard III, Polonius, the first gravedigger, King Hamlet's ghost, Osric, Malvolio, Touchstone, Stephano, Poins, Fluellan, and Sir Hugh Evans. In Restoration and eighteenth century comedy one can find him in parts such as Congreve's Fondlewife, Lord Froth, and Sir Wilful Witwoud, Vanbrugh's Lord Foppington and Sir John Brute, Cibber's Sir Novelty Fashion and Sir Fopling Flutter, and Gay's Peachum. For himself, he wrote plays that featured the roles of stage Irishman or Scotsman: Sir Archy McSarcasm, Murrough O'Doherty, and Sir Pertinax McSycophant (Mathews 7). This illustrates a truely varied range.

Although Macklin believed in beginning with the observation of "nature," he also felt that acting needed to be enlarged in order to give the illusion of life from the

distance of the stage. In the notes for his lecture: "Whether Epic or Dramatic Poets Painters Statuaries or Actors ought to exaggerate or be exact in their imitation of human nature," Macklin expressed the thought that "all acting involved a distortion of reality, and only through distortion could the actor achieve the effect of nature" (Appleton 154-55). John Hill, one of Macklin's early students, reflects Macklin's views in his book The Actor, in which Hill compares acting to paintings seen inside a cathedral:

> A Saint Paul of the natural size might have done for the choir; but that which has to be exalted to the dome, needed to be a colossus. The actor is to consider his pictures in this light. His looks and gestures are so many paintings made to be seen at a distance, and they must often be extravagant in themselves, that they may not soften into nothing. All this must be done with judgement.... in the strict adherence to nature's rules, tho' in an enlarged scale. (1755 ed. 231)

Several contemporaries praise Macklin's technique, his voice in particular. William Cooke says: "His voice was strong, clear, important, and sufficiently variable for the parts he generally played." He continues by praising Macklin for projecting the ends of sentences as clearly and forcefully as the middles (400-01). Doran agrees that "his enunciation was clear, in every syllable" (II: 191). Davies says that "Macklin indeed acted the same part at 75 with as strong a voice as he was master of at 45 (II: 222).

However, other contemporaries felt that Macklin's technique overwhelmed his imitation of "nature." John Taylor, a friend who had seen Macklin in many roles, says, "He was too theoretical for nature," and describes by way of example, his

three "pauses:" moderate, long, and his "grand pause." This last was so long that once a prompter, thinking he needed a cue, called out the line several times: "At length Macklin rushed from the stage, and knocked him down, exclaiming, 'The fellow interrupted me in my grand pause'" (O'Keeffe 296).

Macklin's approach to acting could thus be summarized as one that stripped away obvious artifice, that based itself on an observation of character, but that enlarged "nature" in order to project it to an audience. These qualities can be seen in two of his greatest roles, Shylock and Macbeth.

Macklin began his study for the role of Shylock not only by observing the behavior of the Jews on the stock exchange (as mentioned in the earlier quotation from Garrick), but also by reading the Old Testament and Josephus' History of the Jews (Biog. Dict. 9:7) Restoring Shakespeare's text, he jettisoned the customary version called The Jew of Venice, which had been altered from Shakespeare by Granville, Lord Lansdown. In this version, Shylock was demoted to being a minor character and was always played by a low comedian (Secrets of the Green-Room 61; Kirkman I: 253-54).

Fleetwood, the manager of Drury Lane Theatre, and the rest of the cast (including Kitty Clive as Portia), were sure that Macklin was wrong in changing the text with which they and the public were familiar. In addition, in rehearsals, Macklin simply muttered his lines, and "did not let any person, not even the players, see how he intended to act the part" (Kirkman I: 254, 256). Kirkman, who preserves a full

contemporary account of the preparation of this play, shows that Macklin received arguments against his concept right up until the moment he went onstage. (I: 254-59).

However, the opening night audience was captivated and vindicated Macklin's interpretation. Contemporary praises are numerous. Kirkman describes his scene with Tubal as

> inimitable.... he was at once malevolent and then infuriate, and then malevolent again: the transitions were strictly natural, and the variation of his countenance admirable. (I: 264)

Cooke says:

> Of his Shylock...we have a number of living witnesses, as evidences of its being one of the finest pieces of modern acting; and there are passages in it, particularly in the third act, which exhibit the contrasting passions of grief for his daughter's elopement, and joy at Antonio's misfortunes, which demand an uncommon versatility of powers. This, and the whole of the trial scene, we may safely pronounce, have not been equalled, at least, since Macklin had possession of the part. (404-05)

Alexander Pope is well-known to have exclaimed, "This is the Jew/That Shakespeare drew" (Kirkman I: 264; Doran II: 188).

Thomas Davies, writing in 1783, commends Macklin for restoring to the stage scenes that give a fuller characterization of the role of Shylock "in which the Jew's private calamities make some tender impressions on the audience" (II: 393-94). The Secrets of the Green-Room also praises Macklin for restoring both Shakespeare and "the force of nature" (62). Lansdown's The Jew of Venice was henceforth retired (Kirkman I: 265). In his early forties when he first portrayed Shylock (1741), Macklin continued the part for over 50 years, into his nineties.

Macklin's attempt to approach nature extended to costuming, and as Shylock he wore the type of red hat that his research had shown that Venetian Jews were required to wear (Doran II: 188). However, his costume innovations were more memorable in the role of Macbeth. Macbeth had traditionally been costumed in the officer's red regimental coat and white wig of the day. Macklin, attempting this role for the first time in 1773 when he was in his seventies, was the first to use "the old Scottish garb" (O'Keefe 290). Contemporary engravings show him in a Balmoral bonnet, kilt, a plaid cape, and plaid stockings. (See Appleton, facing page 182.)

Reviewers found a truth in Macklin's Macbeth that was equivalent to his Shylock performance. John Taylor said: "He seemed to be more in earnest than any other actor I have subsequently seen" (O'Keeffe 290). The Morning Chronicle said "He seemed to have studied the character with peculiar and profound attention." And the London Evening Post found "more thinking in Macklin's acting, more *sense* in his emphasis...than in any actor I had ever seen (both qtd. in Appleton 179). William Cooke says that "his soliloquies were so much the natural working of real character, as to demand the profoundest attention" (407).

The Biographical Dictionary suggests that Macklin's desire to cut away artifice may not have originated so much in any theory, as in the "four-square bluntness of his personality," and that only later did he intellectualize his instinct into a method (9:22). Certainly Macklin had a manner

that was frank and candid with few social graces. Although he had a warm heart, he could be blunt to the point of being impolite, and he had an easily aroused temper which led in one instance to a green-room brawl in which he killed a fellow actor. As Peter Burke describes him:

> He was rough and blunt to an extreme degree in his language and manner; he was haughty and independent in spirit, and very irritable in temper.... Yet with all this, he was one of the kindest of men, a warm friend, and a devoted husband and father. (qtd. in Mathews 19)

John Bernard says:

> His manners grew out of his mind, which being powerful and profound, cared not for oil or ornament, so long as it could express itself with vigor (qtd. in Mathews 21).

Certainly Macklin's forthright personality could bare no patience with the conventions of polite society. And as he was also a strongly emotional man, he could convey tremendous energy on stage. Given this frankness and intensity, it seems consistant that Macklin would favor an acting style that was free of artificiality and conveyed a sense of heightened, impassioned reality.

II. Macklin's Pedagogy

At every stage of his career, from when he first performed on the London stage until the last years of his retirement, Macklin taught acting. Looking back from a century's perspective, Edward Abbot Perry (1891) sees Macklin's teaching as his most important contribution: Macklin's...chief and most important character was that of dramatic tutor" (191).

Remarks from his students confirm that his teaching was like his personality; he was kindly, but would brook no nonsense. Thomas Holcroft remembers his gruff manner:

> He had no respect for the modesty of youth or sex, but would say the most discouraging, as well as the grossest things.... It was common with him to ask his pupils, why they did not rather think of becoming bricklayers than players.... He could pronounce the words *scoundrel*, *fool*, *blockhead*, familiarly, without the least annoyance to his nervous system.... His authority was too severe a climate for the tender plant of genius ever to survive in. His judgement was, however, in general sound, and his instructions those of a master. (qtd. in Mathews 20-21)

Kirkman emphasises the care Macklin took of his pupils:

> He was ever ready to give his advice to young performers, and bestowed a great deal of pains and time in the instruction of his pupils, of whom he seldom had less than two or three. These he not only entertained in his own house, but furnished them with every necessary they wanted, and even supplied them with money. He did all this without any pecuniary retribution; and, as soon as he thought them qualified for making their appearance on the stage, he procured them an engagement. (II: 271)

Appleton says:

> To the end of his life his door was open to any would-be students. If they could survive the shock of the first encounter, they could profit enormously by his knowledge and experience, for despite his harsh manner and cruelly uninhibited criticism, he was passionately dedicated to teaching and to furthering his student's careers. (162)

Macklin began by ridding his students of all formality and artificiality of manner. When asked to hear and advise one young actor, Macklin said:

> Sir, the young gentleman has genius, but the first thing he does must be to *unlearn* all that he has already *learned*; until he does that, he cannot *learn* to be a player. (Kirkman II: 271-72)

Macklin's method of "unlearning" an actor was to have him or her speak lines of ordinary conversation as if in real life.

When he felt the student was able to achieve a "naturalism" in his delivery, then Macklin would have the performer "accommodate [his] techniques to the requirements of the play and the playhouse." This type of instruction was used in place of the commonly employed heightened recitation of purple passages from Shakespeare (Appleton 157-58).

John O'Keeffe, the late eighteenth century playwright and one of Macklin's students, records this story:

> Macklin had a pupil, Philip Glenville, a handsome, tall, fine young man, whom he was preparing for the stage. In Macklin's garden, there were three long parallel walks, and his method of exercising their voices was thus. His two young pupils...walked firmly, slow and well, up and down the two side walks; Macklin, himself, paraded the centre walk: at the end of every twelve paces he made them stop; and turning gracefully, the young actor called out across the walk, "How do you do, Miss Ambrose?" -- she answered, "Very well, I thank you, Mr. Glenville." They then took a few more paces, and the next question was, "Do you not think it a very fine day, Mr. Glenville?" "A very fine day, indeed, Miss Ambrose," was the answer.... And this exercise continued for an hour or so.... Such was Macklin's method of training the management of the voice: if too high, too low, a wrong accent, or a faulty inflection, he immediately noticed it, and made them repeat the words till all was right. Soon after this, Glenville played Antonio to his Shylock...and Miss Ambrose, Charlotte in his own Love a la Mode. (19)

John Hill gives a similar report:

> It was his manner to check all the cant and cadence of tragedy; he would bid his pupil first speak the passage as he would in common life, if he had occasion to pronounce the same words; and then giving them more force, but preserving the same accent, to deliver them on the stage. Where the player was faulty in his stops or accents, he set him right; and with nothing more than this attention to what was natural, he produced out of the most ignorant pesons, players that surprized everybody. (1755 ed. 239-40)

William Cooke describes seeing Macklin instructing his pupils, and confirms that he "restrained" them from "artifical" habits and directed them toward the "course of nature." Thus they "spoke the language of the character they represented, as little mixed with *art* as stage performers will admit of" (148-49).

Although Macklin "banish'd the bombast that us'd to wound our ears continually," still he acknowledged that on occasions, a heightened delivery was appropriate "to accompany the thought...in its intended and proper dignity" (Hill 1750 ed. 194-95). Thus, Macklin disciplined his students "relentlessly" to develop vocal variety. Articulation and projection were taught by having the pupils recite from Milton and Shakespeare (Appleton 158-59). The Secret History of the Green-Room says, "[Macklin] is the first actor that ever reduced the profession to a science, and he is very much celebrated for his skill in instructing theatrical candidates" (68).

In May of 1743, Macklin was dismissed from Drury Lane Theatre because of a dispute with the manager, Fleetwood. Finding no other work, Macklin decided to form his own company with young actors, training them in his more "natural" methods. For their debut, Macklin hired the Haymarket Theatre and advertised a concert for February 6, 1744, after which a free performance of Othello would be given. This was a frequently-employed ruse to circumvent the 1737 Licensing Act.

Macklin played Iago to young Samuel Foote, who was making his stage debut as Othello.

Reactions to Macklin's student production of Othello show that the teacher achieved his purpose. John Hill says of Samuel Foote, that "he play'd'[Othello] with applause, and tho' not without faults, yet perhaps with more beauties than have been seen in it since" (1750 ed. 250). Hill continues to say that although some of the audience expected a more pompous delivery, yet Foote's "performance [was] more natural and affecting than that of any man who had ever before been seen in the same character" (1750 ed. 251).

The thirty-five young actors in Macklin's company gave fourteen performances from February to July of 1744, presenting six mainpieces as well as a variety of afterpieces and musical numbers (Biog. Dict. 9: 11-12). However, the venture was not a financial success, and in the summer of 1744, Macklin disbanded the company and went on tour in the provinces with his wife and daughter. In December of the same year, the management of Drury Lane changed, and Macklin was re-hired (Biog. Dict. 9: 11-12). Macklin was never again to direct a "school," but he continued to take on private students until his very old age.

William Appleton, Macklin's twentieth century biographer, suggests that although Garrick had more visible impact on the "natural" acting style in the mid-eighteenth century, that Macklin had more lasting influence through his pupils (162). Macklin even coached Garrick, approximately 18 years his

junior. Attempting the role of King Lear for the first time in March of 1743, when he was just 26 years old, Garrick was not well-received. Macklin told the younger actor that he did not make Lear "sufficiently infirm," nor did he give him adequate dignity or curse Goneril strongly enough. After Macklin's coaching, Garrick's next performance two months later was said to be much improved (Biog. Dict. 9:10). This role eventually developed into one of Garrick's finest.

Garrick's chief rival on the London stage was Spranger Barry, a tall, handsome man who specialized in romantic leads and who was also one of Macklin's pupils. Kirkman tells us:

> Mr. Barry was unquestionably one of the most pleasing tragic actors that ever trod the English stage. He owed a great deal of his fame to the admirable instructions of Mr. Macklin, who devoted a great deal of his time to the improvement of his favorite pupil. (II: 272)

Davies says that "It is to Macklin we chiefly owe the many admirable strokes of passion with which Barry surprized us in Othello" (III: 441).

III. Macklin's Directing

There remains little material to make a comprehensive study of Macklin as a stage director. One finds only snatches of comments about his work at various times. Contemporary William Cooke says that as soon as Macklin achieved some "ascendancy" on the London stage, the Drury Lane manager, Mr. Highmore, delegated to him "the office of drilling and organizing" (403). Even before Garrick had made his debut in 1741, Macklin had "established himself as the effective

director at Drury Lane, where he had the opportunity of stressing the belief in natural acting" (Bartley 18). John Hill describes "the pains [Macklin] took while entrusted with the care of the actors at Drury Lane, and the attention which the success of those pains acquir'd him" (1750 ed. 194).

Previously, rehearsals were few and the actors just mumbled their lines, using stock gestures and conventional poses or attitudes. It was frequently difficult to compel actors to attend rehearsals at all. Yet Macklin supervised rehearsals meticulously and demanded that the actors pay close attention to his orders. Negative reactions of the manager, actors, and crew, show how novel his approach was at the time. Actors complained about the unusual length of his rehearsals -- from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. -- and complained that Macklin would "grow tedious" in arranging the "*etiquette* of the scene, in respect to sitting or standing; crossing the stage, or remaining still" (Cooke 404). The actors felt that blocking was up to their own volition, and Cooke records one incident of an actor accusing Macklin of treating him like a schoolboy and telling him "the ABCs" of his profession (Cooke 404). Macklin also had difficulty getting the actors playing Macbeth's witches -- traditionally played as low comic characters by three men -- to play the parts as evoking tragic fate. John O'Keeffe remembers that when one actor in Dublin exclaimed that Macklin was drilling them like a "Prussian," Macklin made the whole cast sit together in complete silence in the green room for a full hour by the clock, until all

tempers had quieted down. Then he took up the rehearsal where he had left it off. The manager backed up Macklin's tactic and the actors reluctantly acquiesed because all the coming performances, in which Macklin was a guest artist, were sold out (20-21).

Macklin also encouraged actors to be attentive not only to their own parts, but also to what else was going on in the scene. They were not to let their eyes wander over the audience but to show some interest in what was taking place on stage (Cooke 403). William Macready, whose father was an actor in Macklin's student company, describes Macklin's manner at rehearsals:

> His manner was generally harsh, as indeed was his countenance.... There was good advice, though conveyed in his gruff voice and imperious tone. "Look at me, sir, look at me! Keep your eye fixed on me when I am speaking to you! Attention is always fixed; if you take your eye from me you rob the audience of my effects, and you rob me of their applause!" (quoted in Mathews 14)

When actor Lee Lewes embroidered his part with comic bits in Macklin's Love a la Mode, and then replied to Macklin's objection by saying, "'Tis only a little of my nonsense," Macklin retorted, "Aye...but I think *my* nonsense is rather better than yours; so keep to that if you please, sir" (O'Keeffe 20).

While Macklin and Garrick agreed in principle on the type of reforms they wished to make in rehearsals, Macklin went further than did Garrick. While Garrick thought of each play chiefly as a vehicle for himself, Macklin visualized the acting and production aspects as a unity (Appleton 159-60,

174). From the perspective of the twentieth century, William Appleton sees Macklin as "concerned not only with individual performances, but, to an even greater degree than Garrick, with the *totality* of a production" (Appleton 160). And O. J. Bartley says that Macklin came closer to being a director in the modern sense than anyone else before the late nineteenth century (21-22). When Macklin decided in the fall of 1773 to produce Macbeth, he made meticulous preparations, considering not only the roles, but the sets, costumes, and music as well. He researched the character of Macbeth as closely as he had done that of Shylock, putting not only Macbeth in kilts, but also many of the other characters in "old Caledonian garb." Appleton says, "Contemporary accounts make it clear that he had pondered every aspect of the production" (171-72).

Aristocrats often enjoyed presenting amateur theatricals, although they were usually given for small groups of well-wishers on private estates. However, in 1751, Sir Francis Blake Delaval approached Macklin to ask that he direct a more professional production of Othello in which he and his friends could act. Since Sir Francis was a close companion of Samuel Foote, it may have been Foote who recommended Macklin to Sir Francis (Perry 88). Delaval spent over 1000 pounds for professionally painted sets, costumes, and the rental of Drury Lane Theatre. Macklin directed the rehearsals and coached the actors, emphasizing his "natural" method (Gent. Mag. 122).

Sir Francis, whom society considered "talented" but "dissolute" (Biog. Dict. 9: 13), took the title role, while

his younger brothers played Iago and Cassio, and his mistress, Mrs. Quon, played Desdemona. Londoners were as much intrigued by the scandal as by the play (Appleton 93-94). One could attend the performance only by private invitation, and every one of the thousand seats in Drury Lane Theatre, including the upper galleries, were filled with the highest members of society, including the royal family. The Gentleman's Magazine, which usually did not review play revivals, spent over three double-columned pages describing the event, saying that another 20,000 Londoners wanted to see the performance and that it was likely to be a topic of conversation for the next three months (120). The House of Commons ajourned at 3 p.m. that day just so members could attend. (Kirkman I: 334-35).

In this situation, with aristocrats applauding their own, it would be unusual if the performance were not appreciated. Yet it is said that the actors went beyond the merely competant and put into practice Macklin's precepts on "natural" acting. The Gentleman's Magazine reported that:

> ...the greatest part of the play was much better performed than ever was on any stage before. In the whole, there was a face of nature that no theatrical piece, acted by common players, ever came up to. It was evident that the performers felt every sentiment they were to express. (120)

Macklin seems to have freed his amateur actors from artificial conventions:

> Their elocution was natural and easy; free from the whine, the mouthing, the cant, the clap-trap trick, and the false consequence, so often hackneyed upon the stage.

In addition, they were observed to maintain their concentration throughout the play and to stay in character (Gent. Mag. 121). After discussing in detail the "natural" acting and characterization of the leading roles, The Gentleman's Magazine concludes, "Mr. Macklin got great honour and deservedly, by his pupils on this occasion" (122). The review also reinforces how Macklin oversaw all aspects of the production by praising details of the stage business (121) and describing the costumes as "not only magnificant, but...much better adapted to the characters than any we have seen them dressed in before" (120).

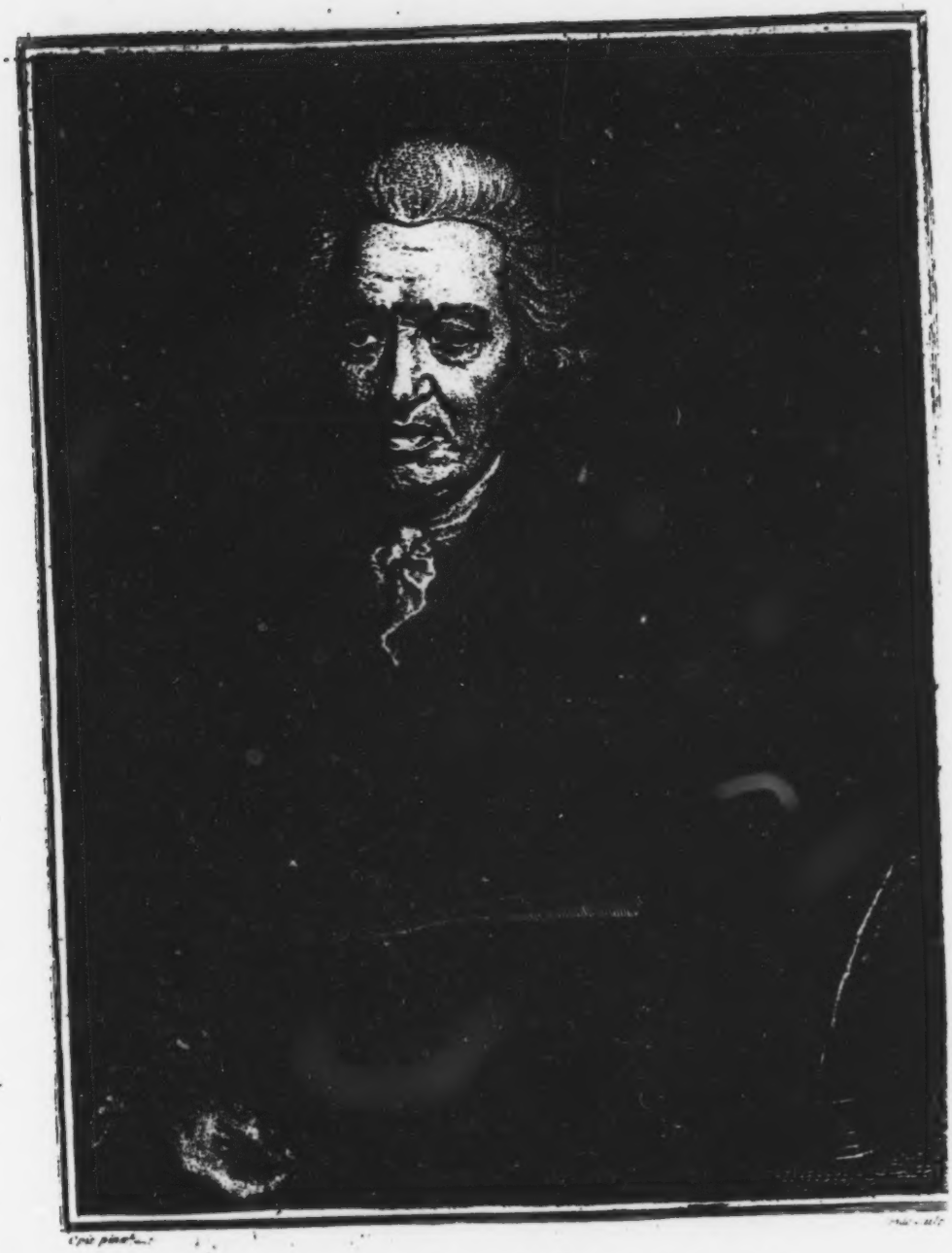
The loss of Macklin's acting treatise, "On the Science of Acting," may partially explain why Garrick has long been held to be the primary advocate of the "natural" school of acting in the mid-eighteenth century. Even this limited introduction illustrates that Macklin's influence on acting and directing style was at least equal to, if not more than Garrick's contribution. Contemporary accounts as well as Macklin's remaining papers show that the actor eschewed obvious artifice, requiring students to unlearn stage conventions and to speak with simple truth. As Macklin was accustomed to make a close study of the characters he planned to represent, he undoubtedly passed this necessity for observation and characterization on to his students. Yet Macklin realized that "nature" had to be enlarged in order to be projected to an

audience and that to do this one needed a good vocal technique. Macklin was also one of the first to conceive of a stage production as an artistic unity and to direct the blocking, business, and design, an attitude which did not make him popular with professional actors who preferred to continue with their accustomed routines. Contemporaries say that Macklin reduced acting to a science. Unfortunately, we know just a few of the pedagogical exercises that Macklin used with his students.

It has been suggested that Macklin's desire to practice and teach a more natural acting style did not originate from his adherence to any theory, but came from his own frank and open nature which could harbor no deviousness or pretence. Whatever the ultimate source of Macklin's practice, he seems through his personal example and his students to have had a more pervasive influence on the mid-eighteenth century trend toward a more natural acting style than anyone else.

[1] Depending on whom one reads, Macklin may have been a centinarian. Although he died in 1797, estimates of his birthdate range from 1690 to 1699.

[2] In The Image of the Actor, Shearer West speaks of the difficulty of interpreting the styles of past actors, and in his third chapter, "Constructions of Realism and Classicism," he describes the "classical" tendancies of realistic Garrick and the "realistic" tendancies of classical Kemble.



Charles Macklin, Comedian, in his 93rd Year (1792)
From the author's collection.

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